

INTRODUCTION : CHALLENGES OF ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST-MDGs ERA

The UN Millennium Declaration united heads of states in making a pact to adopt human development as the key premise based on principles of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. It also gave birth to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight globally applicable goals that were adopted in 2000 by 193 countries with a promise to attain these goals by 2015. While the MDGs have been widely praised for conveying the need to end poverty in a clear and concrete message, they have also been the target of sharp criticism. For example, the MDGs have been critiqued for not reflecting the breadth of what had come to be understood about poverty and development through the 1990s; for not being sufficiently attuned to ground realities and policy priorities, especially in developing countries and for being created through a top-down process with very little meaningful input from civil society and developing countries. The lack of a participatory process for formulating the goals is viewed by critics as particularly damaging because it has translated into a lack of ownership of the MDGs at the ground level.

As the deadline draws near, it is clear that many countries have not made significant progress towards attaining the MDGs. It is predicted, for example, that more than 50 countries — including some of the poorest in the world, such as Chad, Somalia and Sierra Leone — will miss the MDG targets for reducing mortality rates for young children and mothers. Another important target, of reducing hunger by half, is set to be missed by countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. The UN appears to have recognised the myriad failings and criticisms that have plagued the MDGs since their inception. In particular, it has made a concerted effort to make the process for developing the successor framework for the MDGs genuinely open and participatory. A global process was initiated by the UN in 2012 seeking inputs to shape the development agenda that will replace the MDGs when they expire in 2015. Set in this

backdrop, civil society organisations and networks have been engaging with the process through multiple rounds of consultations as well as online platforms, such as the *My World* and *World We Want* initiatives. Nonetheless, due to capacity constraints of Global South governments and civil society organisations, their inadequate involvement in the processes at a global level and scant awareness about the discourse, there remains a dearth of voices from the countries of the Global South in shaping this discourse.

In order to ensure that the discourse on the framework and contours of the new global development agenda that will succeed the MDGs in 2015 is evenly balanced, with adequate voice and articulation by the developing South of specific challenges and issues of the Global South, the deliberations on the post-2015 agenda must be more broadly based. In this regard, it becomes vital to engage a diverse set of stakeholders in this conversation so that the articulation of the problems as well as the solutions are not typically 'North-led and with onus of the South' (as was the case in the previous round of MDGs), but 'South-led and Southern-centric' and applicable universally.

Such concerns manifested in a national campaign in India led by Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA) to engage wide-ranging actors — including community voices, civil society organisations, parliamentarians and media. A key actor missing till now in this compact was the academic community that had hitherto been a separate pillar feeding into the global conversations. The Institute for Human Development (IHD) has been actively engaged in the discourse on human development issues and has been partnering with diverse stakeholders in India and South Asia. However, given this background, IHD and WNTA collaborated to bring within this fold the reasoning and strength of the academic community.

The Southern academia brings with it the necessary evidence to substantiate for a Southern-led, Southern-centric new development agenda that promises a more socially-just, equitable and sustainable world. Through this initiative, valid evidence and academic reasoning from the Global South were to feed into the global agenda-setting process for a new development agenda post-2015, post-MDGs. In this context it is important to recollect the perspective of the first *Human Development Report* (1990) that human development is more than just measuring economic growth, but also about ensuring that people have choices that transcend mere basics of good health, education and decent quality of life to substantives, such as political freedoms, human rights and respect. The MDGs did succeed in providing a universal and simple template to measure development that moves beyond mere economic growth as a parameter to assess progress. Broadly, our recommendations for the new development agenda must be defined

by the following principles. The existing MDGs have largely ignored the universality, indivisibility, inter-dependence and inter-relatedness of human rights. If the post-2015 development agenda is to remain relevant, it must emphasise the fundamental inalienability of human rights as the macro frame to locate within it specific goals and targets. Inequalities, discrimination and social exclusion, particularly caste, ethnic and gender inequalities, have always been inadequately addressed. Furthermore, the evolving development agenda in the post-2015 frame needs to focus on diagnostic, i.e., structural reforms, rather than only prescriptive measures. In this context, it becomes necessary to ensure that all prevalent macroeconomic policy directions be reviewed through the lens of intersecting realities including discrimination based on caste, religious, sexual and gender identities. A gender-transformative, gender-inclusive and gender responsive policy frame guided by principles of gender equality and equity is essential to advance and achieve the full potential of all women in all spheres of life — economic, social and political.

The principle of a sustainable development pathway, when seen through the lens of the majority of the population of the globe and the dangers of climate change, will mean in real terms year-round access to basic necessities of food, shelter and livelihood for all men and women to survive with dignity and to secure these basic necessities even in the wake of climate variability. The goal must not be merely to alleviate poverty, but to ensure ‘well-being’, where economic and environmental sustainability are simultaneously ensured and the world acts together to reverse global warming and deal adequately with its impacts. The principle of ‘just’ governance must translate into the government being responsive to the needs of the people. There is a need for greater transparency, accountability and participation in terms of economic policy-making. ‘Just’ governance should be the cornerstone of governance reform and adequate institutions, capacities and resources need to be allocated to ensure implementation. This principle needs to apply not only to public institutions, but to the private sector, to global governance institutions and to the developed world to ensure a level playing field.

In order to accomplish any of the concrete recommendations for the post-2015 frame, articulating means to implement the global development goals will also be crucial. While domestic resource mobilisation among other things is critical, we underscore the importance of public financing for development and view private capital only as a supplement (even when seen as a source of long-term finance) for developing countries. Experiences from developing countries, such as Brazil, show that reducing inequality and expanding benefits of development are possible through strong government interventions.

The contributions to this volume, to a large extent, address the above concerns. It is hoped that the inputs from leading academics from South Asia and beyond, as presented here, will enrich the ongoing global agenda-setting process and frame the contours of defining human development post-2015, post-MDGs.

This volume is a collection of writings and reflections on the development agenda for the post-2015 period for diverse themes, such as poverty, food security, employment, education and health. Many common threads run through these varied themes. The symposium yielded considerable insight in terms of the recurring issues across themes that must be accorded priority in the post-2015 agenda.

The three day deliberations indicated that the increasing inequality in many of the developing countries is a matter of concern for all. Inequality has, in fact, increased across the globe since the 1990s. Between 1988 and 2008, the income of the poorest tenth households in the world declined by 25.3 per cent, while the income of the richest 5 per cent households increased by 6.7 per cent.¹ Speakers provided evidence of an increase in the risk and vulnerability faced by the global poor following neoliberal globalisation policies.

The multi-dimensional nature of poverty was also highlighted. There is now wide recognition of the fact that poverty and inequality are not just about income, wealth or assets, but also about non-income inequality, such as lack of access to other basic facilities of health and educational opportunities, water and sanitation services, electricity, and so on. For instance, despite the fact that reducing the number of undernourished was one of the foremost goals in the MDG era, the number of chronically undernourished people actually increased from 1996 (788 million) to 2010 (868 million) and the majority of these people reside in the developing countries.² Again, unequal access to these opportunities can rise from various axes such as gender, location, age, ethnicity, religion/caste, etc. The post-MDG scenario needs to reflect this changed perspective of poverty and inequality. Inequality in accessing educational and health facilities was emphasised by several speakers, as was the inequality in accessing resources. Thus, the challenge of reducing inequality and tackling poverty in all its dimensions were identified as key areas for the post-2015 framework.

Tackling inequality at all levels would essentially entail a need to adopt a framework based on human rights, in which the principles of non-discrimination and accountability are salient. This would then incorporate issues of providing a social protection floor to the relevant segment of population. The rights would, thus, embrace food security, health, education, etc. and keep gender rights within the fold as well. By framing food, water, education, health, social security, etc. as human rights and using the strongest possible language on ensuring universal access and ensuring references to sexual and reproductive rights and civil and

political rights, the Global South will advance a great distance towards correcting many of the present structural imbalances.

Inequality in access to opportunities implies that there is a need to unpack aggregate goals since these averages disguise unequal progress at the disaggregated level. When goals are disaggregated by gender, race, age, location, etc., a more nuanced picture emerges which will help address each issue more effectively and in keeping with the UN's guiding principle for the post-2015 agenda of 'leaving no one behind'. Thus, unequal opportunities for different segments of population, such as women, Muslims, tribals and Scheduled Castes (in the Indian context), rural inhabitants and migrants (as in the case of many developing countries), will be revealed more starkly once greater levels of disaggregation are incorporated into the goals.

Another criticism of the MDGs that emerges from the contributions to this volume is the failure to adequately take into account the interconnected nature of the eight goals. For instance, health and nutrition goals cannot be pursued in isolation of food availability and sanitation. Food production and nutrition depend not only upon water availability and management, but also on climate change issues as well as on women's agency and the reduction of inequality. Education goals are connected to the poverty and employment situation in a child's household, as well as to gender, caste/religion and other factors reflecting social disadvantage. Therefore, the future goal-setting for the post-2015 years will have to take this synergy into account.

Another lacuna in the MDGs is that they put too much emphasis on articulating monitorable goals, targets and indicators — a priority for donors — at the cost of detailing the process to be followed to attain these goals and also showing much regard for distributional outcomes. The post-MDG framework will need to address these important concerns.

The present volume starts with a section on some important aspects of Human Development in the Global South which contains six papers. This section is followed by five thematic sections, each containing a number of papers. The five thematic sections are: Poverty and Social Protection, Food Security and Nutrition, Employment, Education and Health and Health care. The thematic sections are followed by a concluding section indicating the way forward.

SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The concept of human development has been at the forefront of the development agenda in recent years, with the MDGs being instrumental in retaining the focus

of governments on the human development paradigm through objective goals and target-oriented deliverables. As the papers in this section indicate, despite their many weaknesses, the MDGs have brought the problems of deprivation, poverty, hunger, maternal and child mortality to the forefront of the development discourse and have raised the level of discussion on human development.

In his paper, Nagesh Kumar argues that the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, which formed the basis for the MDGs, was a landmark event in the global development discourse. It raised awareness about human development among governments, civil society and the international community, and also brought the concept to the forefront of government policy. While several countries of the Asia and the Pacific have fared reasonably well vis-à-vis MDG targets related to poverty, access to safe drinking water, gender parity, and so on, the MDGs are still an unfinished agenda. In the Asia and the Pacific, a population of 900 million earns a meagre daily income of \$1.25 to \$2, which is just above the poverty line. Those that are employed are also mainly engaged in low quality jobs in the informal sector and have negligible social security benefits. Poor infrastructure facilities, poor access to transport and electricity in rural areas and vulnerability to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and drought, only aggravate the crisis. Kumar argues that the path to human development in the Global South is also marred by the framework of global partnership. Countries of the Asia and the Pacific region, which house about 60 per cent of the global poor, do not receive even 20 per cent of overseas development assistance (ODA). This indicates a palpable mismatch between poverty and distribution of ODA. In addition, high tariffs on labour-intensive goods and agriculture market taxes weaken the productive capacity of developing countries. Protectionist policies in developed countries also have a severely negative impact on developing countries. The existing financial structure, a legacy of the erstwhile Bretton Woods system, is not capable of financing the required development agenda, according to Kumar. There is a need to evolve a new financial structure which is more inclusive of the developing and emerging economies and to engage with complementary opportunities for South-South cooperation.

The main message emerging from Indira Hirway's paper is that structural inequality relating to gender needs to be addressed in an integrated manner in the post-2015 framework. With this objective, the MDG framework should be worked out in an alternative paradigm. Gender must be a part of all components and not a few listed indicators, if poverty eradication and, more importantly, inequality reduction is to be achieved. The present MDG framework has not paid enough attention to distributive and structural inequalities — be it geographical, social or gender-based. From a gender perspective, the all important issues of

violence against women, women's empowerment, women's unpaid work and other pervasive gender inequities in social, economic and political fronts have been largely ignored. Time-use surveys have shown that women do a lot of unpaid work and that such unpaid work gets translated in the labour market into lower wages, lower work participation, and so on. Women also suffer from a lot of time-poverty. The first indicator of eradicating extreme poverty does not address these intra-household poverty issues. Land-ownership of women is not addressed and there is no reference to women with regard to health, education or employment goals. Despite professed shifts on fundamental counts during discussions on the post-2015 agenda, such as leaving no one behind and ensuring jobs for inclusive growth, moving towards a stable and peaceful society, the UN High Level Panel's report on the post-2015 agenda accepts the established paradigm with economic growth as the focus and suffers from the earlier limitations of being unable to address the more deep-seated structural problems. This is discouraging. Hirway suggests that the post-MDG framework must move beyond the High Level Panel report and address systemic and structural inequities for women's empowerment and aim for a gender-just society.

Inequality is much harder to address than problems, such as poverty and malnutrition, because inequality becomes visible only in the long term. Inequality must, therefore, be included as a key issue in long-term planning. This is the message that emanates from the paper by Marcelo Medeiros in this volume. Medeiros points out that over a period of five decades, Brazil became industrialised, built a stable democracy and grew rapidly, moving from the bottom half to the top third of the distribution of countries by per capita GDP. Yet, it remains one of the most unequal countries in the world, with low human development indicators for some segments of the population. The extent of income inequality in Brazil may be gauged from the fact that the top 1 per cent of the population in Brazil earns as much as 60 per cent of the population and 70 per cent of the total income. The case of Brazil clearly demonstrates that while economic growth is important, it is not sufficient for human development. As Medeiros points out, however, the role of the State in remedying the problem of inequality is extremely complex, since there is no guarantee that interventionist policies will lead to a reduction of inequality. There is no such thing as a neutral public policy, Medeiros claims, in terms of distribution. In his assessment, the final balance in the case of Brazil is negative: the Brazilian State, in other words, has made a net contribution to increasing inequality.

Inequality is also the focus of the contribution by Cheng Jie in this volume. China has scripted an economic success story with double digit annual growth rates, performing remarkably well with respect to several MDG indicators and human development indices. China became the world's second largest economy

in 2010, with per capita GDP of 6,100 US dollars in 2012, which catapulted it into the ranks of the upper middle-income countries. According to the latest census in 2010, furthermore, average life expectancy in China increased to 74.8 years and the average years of schooling reached nine years, with a 99.8 per cent primary school enrolment rate. Cheng Jie maintains that despite such instances of success, these averages hide deep-seated income inequalities and a large rural-urban divide. Rural areas are fuelling urban growth with low cost labour, low price agricultural inputs, but the rural-urban gap contributes to 40 per cent of the inequality in China. Regional imbalances of GDP, differences in human development achievements among provinces, as well as inequity for migrants, are pronounced in China. Jie notes that there are several institutional barriers to mobility in China, such as a lack of social security for migrant labour, limited property rights for rural inhabitants and limited credit availability for the private sector and SMEs. Jie highlights the need for making equity and equality as the core objectives of human development and argues that providing equity in terms of opportunity is as important as equity of outcomes.

Human development in the Global South is grappling with the challenge of inequality at present. A unique dimension of inequality is the social exclusion that is a typical feature of the Indian economy. Surinder S. Jodhka's thoughtful contribution to this volume traces the evolution of a new language of development studies — human development — that focuses on the need to fulfil the minimum needs of all citizens. This is a welcome shift from development studies' longstanding inclination to compare countries on the basis of individual attributes and national income alone, an exercise that tended to conceal the structures of social relations and power hierarchies that lead to uneven development outcomes across different communities of people. As suggested by Amartya Sen, one of the pioneers of this new approach, if development is to be understood as the "removal of substantial unfreedoms", we must recognise that development is as much about social relations as it is about individual and national well-being. Jodhka argues that despite its neoliberal origins and insensitivity to the need for structural change, the language of inclusion and exclusion has enabled social scientists and policy makers in India to identify many critical issues and integrate them into mainstream development discourses. This has led to tremendous gains for the country's historically marginalised communities. A number of negatives remain, nonetheless, such as that ideas like inclusion and exclusion tend to de-politicise development, glossing over the need to address structural inequalities and alter existing value frames and patterns of distribution. As a case study on the progression of caste reservation policies in Punjab shows, furthermore, the concepts of inclusion and exclusion can become captive to populist politics.

Inequality manifests itself in almost all the spheres of the Indian economy and has persisted despite decades of robust economic growth. India is also fairly low down the global list of countries in terms of human development indicators. This paradox demands a closer look and the post-MDG outlook for India must aim for a growth pattern that creates more employment, lift adequate number of people out of poverty and reduce overall inequality in the society. This is the focus of discussion in the paper by Tanuka Endow. Post-reform, and even during the 15 years following the MDG declaration, India has enjoyed relatively high growth rates for most of the years. Poverty has also showed a downward trajectory and yet around one-fifth of the population remains mired in poverty. In absolute terms, this translates to 269 million people. What is more alarming, inequality has been rising, although with some recent signs of decline. There are numerous instances of non-income or non-consumption based inequality as well, be it in the spheres of health, education, work conditions, access to basic facilities. The inequality is reflected along various axes of socio-economic groups, location, gender, etc. Endow discusses many of these inequities in the Indian context and underscores the need to address such inequality urgently, albeit not losing sight of remaining on a high growth path.

POVERTY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The two papers in this section point towards a need to take a broader view of poverty and social protection post-2015 — one that is intrinsically linked to the question of inequality and anchored in the rights-based paradigm implicating a greater role of people in policy discourses. The importance of employment generation in reducing inequality and ensuring social security and protection is also emphasised.

In his paper, Ravi Srivastava elucidates the connection between poverty and human rights. He points out that by 2000, the narrow concept of income poverty, defined in terms of private consumption expenditure had lost much relevance. Intense debates on poverty and its measurement have brought to the forefront wider notions of poverty and associated deprivations that are seen as connected to the non-realisation of human rights. In India, for example, the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) helped shift the terms of the discourse on poverty away from the 'poverty line' to focus on broader dimensions of poverty and vulnerability. In tandem, as Srivastava further explains, the concept of social protection, which is grounded in the progressive realisation of human rights, has gained currency. There is a close link, therefore, between poverty, recognised as a denial of human rights and social protection, which is viewed as integral to the progressive realisation of human rights. Srivastava provides insight into how

India has achieved progress, in the last two decades or so, towards instituting a rights-based Social Protection Floor, through initiatives, such as making education of children up to the age of 14 a fundamental right and introducing a limited right to employment in rural areas guaranteeing every rural household 100 days of unskilled employment in public works a year. Srivastava argues that the post-2015 MDG agenda must eschew a narrow conception of poverty and embrace the human rights approach to development. Expanding social protection, linked to the realisation of human rights must, therefore, be central to the new agenda.

Brazil, one of the most important countries in the Global South, has grappled with the inter-related problems of poverty and social protection. The paper by Pedro Lara de Arruda, Beatriz Judice Magalhaes and Ashleigh Kate Slingsby, examines the social policies and programmes of Brazil in terms of how they affect the country's social outcomes by means of the Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I). For Brazil, the goal-setting with reference to the convention helped ensure clear success with regard to pension schemes and provision of universal health care. The authors reveal that Brazil has made commendable progress towards realising the MDGs, and more specifically, that the country has been very successful in targeting its poorest populations with its social programmes. With respect to the social protection floor initiative, Brazil's five priority areas are health, water and food, sanitation and housing, education and other social services, and there are three life stages, as it follows a life cycle approach. Various programmes are spread through these five areas and have specific means for delivering benefits through the life stages. Furthermore, vulnerable groups are the primary focus for the delivery of such initiatives. The single registry system in Brazil, which is a unified database of socio-economic information of individuals, serves as an important method of identifying families living in poverty and vulnerability. Despite such advances, however, the minimum entitlements and social security systems success in Brazil does not translate into an automatic reduction of inequality, which will require focused interventions in the post-MDG scenario.

FOOD SECURITY AND UNDERNUTRITION

The first Millennium Development Goal dealt with the challenges of food security and hunger, reflecting the overwhelming importance of these issues. Enhancing food security and mitigating undernutrition should ideally be a global responsibility. However, the deficits in this area are felt most keenly in the Global South and, more specifically, in South Asian countries. While 842 million people or one out of every eight persons in the world suffer from chronic hunger,⁴ the corresponding figure for South Asia is one out of every four persons. In 2011 the

proportion of underweight children was the highest in South Asia (31%) followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (21%). The paper by S. Mahendra Dev in this section makes it clear that the challenges are indeed formidable.

A very important aspect of food security is food distribution. India, for instance, has significantly improved its food availability, especially that of foodgrains and, yet, accounts for 55 million out of the global 102 million underweight children. In India, 40 per cent and 45 per cent of children suffer from underweight and stunting, respectively. Thus, in spite of high economic growth, hunger and malnutrition continue to persist, implying a disconnect between agricultural growth and nutrition. S. Mahendra Dev's paper in this volume highlights how, despite food availability ceasing to be a challenge at the macro level, challenges persist at household levels, due to issues related to distribution as well as land and water availability.

Research indicates that South Asian countries, particularly India, have a high incidence of gender bias. The association between women's autonomy and food security assumes importance in this context. Malnutrition can be reduced by enhancing women's health, by promotion of gender equality and through the empowerment of women including female education, and the rights of women and children are mutually reinforcing. The post-MDGs development agenda for South Asia and India in particular, needs to acknowledge squarely the cost of hunger, including hidden hunger, as well as malnutrition. The next step needs to be undertaking concrete action in this regard where the entire global community shows its commitment.

Considerable efforts of national governments and global organisations have gone into improving food availability in South Asia, resulting in a decline of the proportion of undernourished by 10 per cent since 1990–92. Yet, the current levels of undernourished in 2011–13 are still unacceptably high at 17.5 per cent. Upali Wickramasinghe's paper argues that despite some improvement in food availability over the years, the progress on this front has been slow in South Asia and following a 'business as usual' approach is unlikely to resolve the situation.

A major reason for this grim projection is that despite the falling contribution of agriculture to GDP, the number of people depending on agriculture for sustenance has not reduced in a corresponding manner, resulting in too many people sharing too small a pie. Other reasons are perpetuated food insecurity caused by excessive population growth vis-à-vis slow rise in agricultural capital stock in a region dominated by smallholders and the steady depletion of the availability of water. Monsoon-dependent agricultural practices also make the South Asian region particularly vulnerable to the fluctuations in temperature and precipitation arising from climate change. Post-2015, the main challenge would be to devise a holistic approach to promoting sustainable forms of agricultural practices, without

compromising the economic viability of farmers' operations and the sustainability of the available resource base.

Access to food refers to the ability of individuals, communities and countries to purchase food in sufficient quantities and quality. Food price increase and declining rates of income growth can severely undermine access to food, making the role of domestic production in a large country crucial in conditions of thin and imperfect grain markets, in particular. Highlighting this important aspect of food security, Hashim discussed India's experience in this context. Although largely self-sufficient in food grain production, India does face problems in terms of supply of non-cereals, such as pulses, oilseeds, fruits, vegetables, meat, etc. Food inflation in the last five years has also been high, indicating the need for the government to pay attention to these issues in the post-MDG period. Water management is another area that needs to be underscored. Food security and rural livelihoods are intrinsically linked to water availability and use. Water management for agricultural production would need adaptation in the face of both climate and socio-economic pressures in the coming decades. Thus, the important focus areas for the government must include water conservation, diversification of cropping pattern and search for alternative sources of food and nutrition.

Undernutrition can set in right at the beginning of a child's journey through life. In fact, it is a major factor in child health and survival since it has been estimated to be an underlying cause of up to one-third of under-5 deaths. As the paper by Arun Gupta and Shoba Suri in this volume points out, the nutrition of infants, especially during the first year, is very critical because it is during this year that a child's brain develops very rapidly. In this context, breastfeeding of infants assumes tremendous importance since it provides a child with all the necessary nutrients. An alarming development is that most of the growth in the demand for breastmilk substitute is coming from developing countries. Although breastfeeding stands out as an important child survival tool and something that affects life later on as well, interventions that address these practices have not received adequate attention during the MDGs era. Thus, there is an unused potential for achieving progress in food and nutrition security in the childhood carried forward during the adulthood. The post-2015 agenda must pay attention to this gap and aim to achieve it within the framework of human rights.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment is a goal that has been relatively neglected in the MDG discourse. The MDGs implied a reliance on economic growth to bring about the eradication of poverty. However, judging by the experience of the last two decades, while

neoliberal policies have led to the stepping up of growth in many developing countries, they have failed to create decent and productive employment opportunities. Rather, the process has been associated with increasing informalisation of the workplace and a rise in the risks and vulnerabilities faced by the poor. Thus, the employment scenario, too, has been marked by stark inequality. It must also be underscored that jobs are important not only for poverty reduction, but also because they are the hallmark of a person's dignity as a human being. A rights-based framework is thus, needed to give employment its due for the post-2015 goal-setting.

Latest estimates by the ILO suggest that every year an additional 40 million persons are being added to the global workforce. Although there has been some reduction in the number of 'working poor' since 1991, the rise in the number of workers who are 'near poor' has been staggering, increasing from 14.8 per cent of all workers in 1991 to 26.1 per cent of all workers in 2011. In developing countries, six out of 10 workers are either 'poor' or 'near poor'.³

The tenuous link between economic growth and poverty reduction, as experienced by developing countries in particular, is highlighted by Rizwanul Islam in his paper. He points out that while growth is necessary for poverty reduction, it is not a sufficient condition. Employment intensity of economic growth is an important factor, particularly in the context of translating the benefits of economic growth into poverty reduction. He uses the experience of South Asian countries, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, to illustrate how employment elasticity declined and in some cases turned negative during the last decade, along with an increase in informalisation. In many cases, such decline in employment elasticity was accompanied by robust growth in output. This experience was different from that of the East and Southeast Asian countries, where labour benefited from the growth process. The target of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people, adopted in 2008, is too little and too late and there are serious limitations regarding the four indicators used in this regard.

The lack of progress towards meeting the MDG objective of "full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people" and the weak link between growth and employment opportunities finds echo in the paper by Rashid Amjad. The lack of progress towards achieving full and productive employment and decent work partly reflects the absence of an analytical framework or mechanism that will help ensure that the goal of developing human resources also translates into productive and remunerative utilisation. This paper, too, reveals the drawbacks of the MDG indicators for employment, indicating that their dependence on poverty estimates is likely to be a

lacuna. In the post-2015 agenda-setting, the MDG indicators for employment could incorporate concepts of Human Utilisation Indicators and Human Utilisation Index to monitor progress and compare relative performance among developing countries.

Reiterating the contradiction between high growth and inadequate decent job creation, the paper by Alakh N. Sharma focuses on the Indian story, where high growth since 1990s has not been accompanied by a significant transformation of the labour market. Lower female work participation over time has been a particularly distressing phenomenon and working conditions continue to be largely poor. The growth pattern has shown some imbalance in the sense that the sectors which contribute more to GDP employ much fewer people compared to sectors which contribute considerably less. Despite a few positives, such as rise in wages and decline in absolute poverty, the challenges are formidable and include increasing informalisation, low education and skill levels of workers and a high degree of regional and social differentiation in access to quality employment. A rights-based post-MDG framework including formulation of a social protection floor with a guarantee of certain basic rights would assume enormous importance in this context.

Nepal, India's neighbouring country, has had a similar experience vis-à-vis the employment situation. Nepal's labour market is characterised by high level of unemployment, large share of unskilled workers and informalisation. Given that annually around half a million youth enter the job market, the end result is that a large number leave the country regularly to search for a job abroad. In this backdrop, Dilli Raj Khanal's paper analyses the troubled employment scenario in this country, which is further impacted by declining employment elasticity and increasing urbanisation. As in India, more focus on the connection between the pattern of growth and scope for employment generation would have enhanced employment opportunities. The post-MDG development agenda in the country, apart from creating more decent jobs, would need to address the issue of inequality squarely and aim to enhance the access of the deprived population to assets, infrastructure and various services via policy and institutional reforms.

EDUCATION

The persistent quality deficit in education has been a matter of great concern in the Southern countries of late. This has been a problematic issue for developing countries in South Asia, such as India and Pakistan, as well as in some African countries and in Brazil, according to research findings. The pattern of economic

returns to education, too, has undergone a change over the years, with returns, instead of being highest at the primary level, increasing as the level of education completed rises. While the explanation could lie in excess supply of workers with basic education, or change in the demand structure of jobs requiring certain skill-sets, a possible reason could be the falling quality of basic education. The focus on primary completion as a part of the MDGs has greatly expanded the enrolment and inevitably the question of quantity-quality trade-off has cropped up. While conclusive evidence is not available, it is entirely possible that rapid expansion of primary level schooling found countries unable to provide matching requirement of teachers and infrastructural inputs, leading to a drop in the quality of learning outcomes.

Geeta Gandhi Kingdon's paper discusses all of the above issues at length and offers other possible explanations for a decline in educational quality. Among these are: teacher absenteeism and lack of commitment on the part of the teachers, student absenteeism, increase in number of students from families with poor educational background, etc. The paper also highlights issues of equity in terms of accessing education, pointing out that gender, disability, location, etc. are still very much axes along which there is inequality in educational opportunity. For the post-2015 agenda, in the context of low learning levels, a learning target with appropriate 'monitorable' indicators is extremely important. 'Process' or 'Intermediate' targets would also be useful. In this regard, teachers' attendance and teachers' own competence for improving learning achievement in schools may prove to be useful indicators. A very important conclusion for the post-2015 development agenda is that the time has come to look beyond primary education and to focus on the secondary level of education, especially in view of the better returns to schooling for the latter.

The experience of Turkey has not demonstrated a quantity-quality trade-off, according to the paper by Alper Dincer. Turkey's journey towards fulfilling the education agenda for the MDGs was carried out with the aid of the Compulsory Educational Law, which was followed by some nation-wide campaigns to expand enrolment with gender-specific focus. Quick expansion in enrolment, as discussed, puts a strain on other resources, especially teachers, which, too, need adequate expansion. In Turkey, laws have been introduced to rationalise the teacher deployment, preventing concentration of teachers in urban areas and other developed regions. Centralised teacher testing, introduction of a new curriculum and other pedagogical innovations aided the process of transition.

Meeting the MDG aims may not always fulfil human development objectives. Despite increased years of schooling, and maintaining a standard quality of learning achievement, Turkey has major gaps in the areas of female labour force

participation, female wages and indicators of women's empowerment. Coupled with this troubling aspect of education are issues regarding gender disparity, high dropout rates, student absenteeism and the need to improve access to the secondary level.

The need to aim at a minimum level of education till the secondary stage has been reiterated in the remaining papers in the section on Education. Emphasising that universal retention should be the priority and that the completion of primary education cycle should be inclusive, the paper by Sudhanshu Bhushan argues for universal secondary schooling as an important goal for the post-2015 years. This is expected to provide a definite gain in terms of converting human resource potential to the development of human capabilities, including income generation. Secondly, in view of the large number of educated youths beyond the age of 18 years who look for gainful employment, skill development of persons beyond the age of 18 years may be considered as an important priority area in the post-MDG period. This would allow a productive engagement of the individual and add to the growth opportunities of the nation. It is also imperative to identify clearly the means of implementing each goal.

Post-primary education and skill development are underscored as extremely important issues in the paper by Wahiduddin Mahmud. Since education is the main ingredient for human capital formation, education systems need to be geared towards developing well-balanced human resources equipped with suitable skills and flexibility for adjustment, in the context of globalised markets and fast changing technologies. In this journey towards educating and imparting skills to their youth, governments of resource-strapped countries can choose to educate their citizens either "widely" (as done by South Korea) or "deeply" (as done by India). The links between a country's education system and its economic performance are mediated through labour market outcomes and here the economic returns to education become very important. Poor employment prospects following years of education are likely to lead to lower demand for education. Another key segment where governments must direct skill development efforts is for those who are already in the workforce. This is particularly important for the South Asian countries where existing skill-sets might need to be upgraded or modified depending on market requirements.

In the post-MDG context, while planning for higher education, private sector participation can provide an opportunity whereby the education-labour linkage can be strengthened by accessing more market-oriented skill training and reducing government's fiscal burden in education spending. Regional collaboration among Southern countries also presents an opportunity in this area. The widening gap between the earnings of the higher educated and lower educated

can be countered by “making the education system an integral part of an inclusive job-creating growth strategy while providing better access for the poor at all levels of education”. In an out-of-the-box recommendation for redressing inequity in educational opportunities, the author suggests, why not even think of setting up “universities for the bottom half”?

HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

Health and health care has been given considerable importance in the MDG framework with three goals being set around health and health care issues. Experiences of different South Asian countries show that many commonalities, such as inequality in access to and use of health care services, high out of pocket expenditure on medical treatment in the absence of comprehensive social insurance, highly diverse and often unregulated private sector and lower levels of public health spending, exist among the countries. Notably, most countries of the region are also united in aspiring towards ensuring universal coverage of health services, as the cornerstone of strategies to ensure faster, equitable attainment of health system goals, including those covered by the MDGs.

In fact, aiming for Universal Health Coverage (UHC) to provide all people with access to affordable and quality health services to tackle the inequality challenge is an important objective for most countries in the Global South, in the post-2015 context. UHC manifests an idealised objective, with an embedded rights-based approach, at the core of which lies health equity. Two of the papers in this section of the present volume have focused on this particular challenge of providing UHC, in India and Nepal. In another paper, Indrani Gupta notes the need to acknowledge that it would be difficult to attain MDGs in India without adequate recognition of inter-sectoral synergies that impact the process of achieving health-related goals. Collectively, the papers have observed that achievement of health-related goals cannot work in isolation and is crucially dependent on the attainment of other MDGs relating to poverty/hunger, gender equality and women’s empowerment, etc. Water and sanitation sector, in particular, forms a very important part of social determinants of health. There is also a need to recognise the changing ground realities of the health sector, for instance, the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases. Given the low budget allocation on public health provisioning in the country and high out of pocket expenditures on health, there is a need to move towards UHC post-2015 in a systematic manner with an integrated, health-systems approach rather than the ‘vertical’ present approach based on individual schemes. The associated fiscal implications also need careful consideration.

Nepal's achievements towards meeting MDGs have been on track, with a relatively higher share of expenditure on public health as a percentage of GDP, around 5–6 per cent of GDP vis-à-vis just above 1 per cent of GDP for India. Shivraj Adhikari's paper contains an assessment of Nepal's progress towards achieving UHC, using the three-dimensional conceptual framework in terms of population coverage, service coverage and financial coverage. At a disaggregated level, however, inequality of service coverage among the population sub-groups becomes apparent. In terms of service coverage, although the supply of commodities, drugs, equipment and staffs are high in public health facilities in Nepal, utilisation of services, effective coverage and continuity of use of services remains low. Although total health expenditure, comprising government and other sources of financing, indicates high share of government health expenditure as a ratio of GDP, private source still remains the principal source of health care financing in Nepal. Overall, Nepal's journey towards attaining UHC is still not smooth and can be ensured only in the context of provision of an essential or narrow service package within a limited fiscal space.

Bangladesh has achieved remarkable success in the health and health care sectors and is one of the countries well on track for achieving the MDGs for 2015. In this context, the major contributory factors, as indicated by M. Hafizur Rahman and Tashrik Ahmed in their paper, include a pluralistic health system characterised by strong NGO leadership, investment in women as agents of social stability, an increasingly diverse economy and a government commitment to social programmes. But, given the persisting health related inequities, the magnitude of health-related problems facing the country and the relatively small size of the NGO sector, health worker shortages, high and increasing share of out of pocket expenditure in total health expenditure and so on, the sustainability of the present momentum is called into question. The need of the hour is, thus, a unified policy framework for coordination between public, private, industry and NGO sectors, which would provide a clear roadmap for the country's health policies. Aiming to shift the balance of the health market towards preserving a cooperative-competition environment, the focus would be on strengthening public sector capacity to provide oversight and strategic leadership.

Health goals, as for many other MDGs, are aggregative in nature and can hide more than they reveal and there are huge disparities in achievements across states, social groups, income distribution in the Indian context. Highlighting this issue in his paper, Sumit Mazumdar has discussed about the different forms of structural inequalities, which, in turn, give rise to observed inequities in the health sector. Discussing the crucial importance of social determinants of health, this paper also indicates poor quality of services and weak responsiveness of the health system as major roadblocks to such goals and recommends that some flexibility

may be built into the goal-setting processes in the future, recognising that while baseline targets are important, contexts also need to be looked at.

WAY FORWARD

In the concluding section of this volume, Thomas Pogge and Mitu Sengupta review the strengths and weaknesses of the current MDG paradigm and ask whether the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are expected to replace the MDGs in 2015, can be kept free of the problems that have plagued the original framework. While the MDGs have been duly lauded for focusing the world's attention on poverty and poor people, there are many legitimate criticisms of the MDGs, such as that they were formulated through a top-down undemocratic process, that they undermined efforts to build national capacities for development and that they disproportionately burdened the poorest countries of the world while demanding very little of affluent states and other influential agents, such as international organisations and multinational corporations. Pogge and Sengupta's assessment of the MDGs highlights many issues that are recurrent themes in this volume and echo the analysis of the other contributors. Among other things, they point to the framework's cursory treatment of the problem of inequality, its narrow conceptualisation of poverty, its weak accountability structure and, most significantly, its muteness on the need to reform the global institutions and practices that exacerbate poverty worldwide.

Looking forward towards the emerging post-2015 agenda and SDGs, Pogge and Sengupta make four pointed recommendations that, if implemented, would ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated: (1) the new development goals should contain a clear reference to whose goals they are supposed to be, clearly specifying the responsibilities of competent agents; (2) the definitions and measurement methods involved in development targets must not be allowed to be changed midway and the tracking of progress must not be entrusted to politically exposed agencies like the FAO and the World Bank, but should be left to an independent international group of top-level academic experts; (3) the new development goals should contain a clear and firm commitment to inequality reduction both within and among countries; and (4) to achieve sustainable development, the new development goals should not merely appeal for greater efforts by governments and other powerful agents, but should also call for structural reforms of the global institutional order that conditions the options and incentives of these and other agents. The authors argue that the world will not make decent progress against poverty until the most powerful agents accept a real responsibility to take poverty into account and make real action commitments — not merely in the

marginal arena of development assistance, but across the board in all their policy and institutional design decisions, at both the domestic and especially the supra-national level.

NOTES

1. Thomas Pogge's keynote presentation in the symposium held in New Delhi on 28–29 April 2014 on 'Human Development in the Global South: Emerging Perspectives in the Era of Post-Millennium Development Goals.'
2. Ibid.
3. UN thematic think piece on employment, 'Emerging development challenges for the post-2015 UN development Agenda,' accessed at http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Think%20Pieces/5_employment.pdf.
4. www.fao.org/publications/sofi/2013/en.